TALES OF WAR

In a Bowery Regiment and His First Command.

BY CAPT. MUSGROVE DAVIS.

The Adventures of a Young Second Lieutenant in this Celebrated Regiment on His First Reporting for Duty—An Illustration of Some of the Earlier Phases of the Volunteer Service in the Late Unpleasantness.

[Conclusion.]

"It has been the custom, where I have served, to allow each relief to rest in their tents for the two hours just previous to standing guard, in order that they may be fresh for duty; the other relief not on duty remaining at the guard-house to turn out for general officers. I shall follow that course here until I see good reason to change it. It is needless for me to ask that the instant the call is sounded you come promptly to the guard-house, as that will be necessary not only to a good understanding, but to the continuance of the privilege. Sergeant, tell off the men and send out the first relief."

The guard looked at one another, but whether they meant to say that I did not know the men I had to deal with, or whether I had found and touched a susceptible chord, I could not tell. I threw the handcuffs into the furthest corner of the guard-house and turned to the inspection of the guard-book. The first relief went out; the old relief came in, and were marched away under command of their sergeant; the second relief went to their tents, and I was left to myself with the third.

During the next two hours I managed to say a pleasant word to each of the men left at the guard-house, and to visit all those upon post, changing their beats for the better when I could. This done, I waited most anxiously for eleven o'clock. If then the men promptly responded to the call, I should be master of the situation. If they did not—

At five minutes to eleven I ordered the call to be sounded, and then turned away. I cannot begin to describe the agony of that interval. It seemed an hour. Every few seconds I would consult my watch, half believing that it must have stopped. What if they should not come? Were not officers and men against me? Would not the colonel himself wink at disobedience? Possibly he had even given the men secret instructions to disregard me. Should I order a corporal's guard to arrest all delinquents, and if the guard refused, or the men resisted, should I shoot them? I had a right to do this, but it would be a terrible measure. My own life would not be worth a penny in that event, and would be measured by seconds.

At length the five minutes passed. Without turning I ordered the sergeant to "fall in the guard." The order was given. I heard the stir of men and the handling of muskets, and knew that some, at least, were present. In a moment the sergeant began to call the roll, while I listened breathless.

"Number One," "Two," "Three," "Four," "Five," "Six," "Seven," "Eight" (to each came the answer "Here!" and my breast began to heave), "Nine," "Ten," "Eleven," "Twelve"—all there!

My heart leaped to my throat, and tears filled my eyes. I turned, but everything swam before me. I attempted to speak, but my chin trembled and my tongue refused its office. I felt that I was fast losing control of myself; so, whirling upon my heel, I walked a few paces away. A moment sufficed to subdue my feelings, and returning I spoke a few earnest words of gratitude to the men and sent them about their duty. Nor was I the only one affected, for I saw a big corporal draw his sleeve across his face, and thus betray the presence of a heart.

I allowed the next relief to go to their tents, and again visited the sentries. When I returned to the guard-house at noon the big corporal came awkwardly toward me, and, touching his cap, said: "Lootinant, can I make ye a cup o' coffee, sur?"

Again I was ready to break down, and it was seconds before I could answer: "Thank you, Corporal, not only for the coffee, which I shall take with pleasure, but also for the first kind word I have had in this regiment."

That opened the ball. One man wanted to fetch the water, and another, putting a bit of pork on a stick, roasted it over the coals for me. In fact, it was evident that I had won the day. My spirits rose for the first time to something near a healthy level, and I began to see daylight. I talked familiarly but dignifiedly with the men, and the rest of the twenty-four hours passed without so much as a shadow of annoyance. Never were soldiers better behaved or more prompt. Not a word, not an act, that was not both cheerful and respectful. So, when we were relieved the next morning, I marched my guard to the parade ground and there spoke briefly my heartfelt satisfaction and gratitude, assuring them that it should not be my fault if we were not soon the best of friends; then dismissed them and turned away. I had gone but a pace or two when the big corporal sang out:

"Three cheers fer the new lootinant!"

And cheer they did, with such a will as to bring the whole camp, officers and men, out of their tents. I raised my cap in acknowledgement, and walked on to my tent, feeling as proud as a lord, and saying to myself: "I've got the men on my side, and the officers may go to—the hospital for all I care."

Tired, nervous and trembling, I unfastened my belt, loosened my clothes, and, without thought of food, sank upon my blankets. Forty-eight hours had I been without sleep, the greater portion of the time under intense excitement, my nerves strained to the utmost. Now the re-action came, losing all self control, prone, with arms outstretched, with the tears streaming down my burning cheeks, and with a heart almost bursting, I wailed: "Mother! Mother! have you forgotten your only son? If there is a God, if there is a heaven, if it is given to those who have passed beyond to guard and guide their loved ones, come to me! Come to me, my mother! I am sore tried. Hold up my hands in this my hour of need;" and there did come to my heart a warm, soothing pressure. Arms—whether of recollection and imagination I know not—but arms encircled me; I seemed to hear a voice of bygone years saying: "Sleep, my poor boy, sleep! The morrow will bring you courage." My eyes closed. My head sank slowly back upon the breast of breasts. I felt the beat of the heart of hearts. I saw the little cot of my childhood and *her* sitting beside it. I smiled, and—and—that is all I recall.

How long I may have slept I do not know, but some time in the afternoon I was roused by a scratch at my tent. Wondering what new form of persecution might be at hand, I said, "Come in." To my surprise it was the captain who parted the flaps, and in a seemingly friendly tone asked me how I felt. I answered that I felt quite well, and again bade him come in. Mumbling something about not wanting to disturb me he finally did step inside. As I turned my valise on end to make him a comfortable seat, I noticed that the name and number had been completely cut out. He observed it the same instant, and our eyes met. For a moment nothing was said. Then, doubling up his fist, he broke silence with "if I knew the scoundrel who done that I'd tie him up by the thumbs"—a favorite mode of punishment in the regiment, as I afterward found.

The incident was a godsend to the man, for it afforded a cloak to his embarrassment and opened the way for what it was soon evident he had come to say.

"Fact is, Lootinant," said he, "I'm a rough man, but I mean to be square, and I come to tell ye that I made a great fool of myself day before yesterday, and I ax your pardon. I was mad when ye come here fer I had calc'lated on your place fer the first sergeant, and allowed ye was the son of some rich man who had got ye in by influence. I didn't suppose that ye had been in the army or knowed anything about soldiering; but I see yesterday at guard-mounting that ye wasn't no slouch and that ye knowed more'n we did. D'ye remember when somebody laughed?"

"I do, captain. Tell me, what was the mistake I made?"

"That's the joke of it. You didn't make no mistake; it was us! We always dressed the new guard two paces in the rear of the old guard, and when you dressed 'em on a line, I says to myself, 'He's done all the rest right, and maybe he's right in this.' So I went and looked at the tactics, and I'll be dashed if you wasn't right. Then says I to the other officers, 'I guess we better study our "Regulations" instead of laughing at this 'ere young feller, for he's got us where the hair is short.' I watched ye all day, and I see'd ye knowed yer biz; and when the men come back this morning and said ye had been in the army longer'n we had, I wuz ashamed of myself, and I couldn't wait no longer till I come to ax ye to take my hand and tell ye that I was proud to have such a lootinant."

He extended a long, bony hand and the tears filled my eyes as I grasped it with both mine.

"Excuse me, captain," I said, "but I am so unstrung that I cannot control myself."

"Don't say a word, Lootinant, for if ye ain't made of iron to stand what ye have, I'll swallow my blanket. The game was to make it too hot fer ye; but if any one troubles ye now, they've got me to deal with. I don't think ye'll have no more trouble, though. And I'm doggone sorry about that valise, but the men hate the volunteer number—they want to keep the old '3d Militia,' and that's the reason they cut the number out. Don't think too much of that; but if I knowed the blackguard who done it, I'd buck and gag him, I would."

We talked long and freely after that, the captain and I; he telling of his service and I of mine. Finally, at my request, Sergeant Allen, "the man whose nose I had broken," was sent for. When he presented himself I told him that, although my commission interfered with his advancement, I did not see how I could do otherwise than hold it; that I was very sorry, but felt sure that in like circumstances he would do as I had done; and concluded by promising him my best efforts to make his position pleasant and secure for him a speedy commission. He left in excellent humor, and there was no more friction between us. In a short time, through my recommendation and others, he was deservedly promoted.

From that day all went smoothly in the regiment, and, with the exception of a few officers who were ashamed to admit that they had been in the wrong, the greatest cordiality existed among us. The men had not been paid off for months, and I won the hearts of my own company by providing them with tobacco.

I could govern them all pretty well, either drunk or sober, excepting my first and stanchest friend, the tall corporal—who, by the way, when he got drunk, which I am sorry to say was often the case, would always reiterate his favorite threat of killing me. He was the only man in the army whom I ever had to order into irons; but, in every instance, after sobering up, he would thank me for having punished him and abuse himself for having offended.

My reconciliation with the colonel was a matter of more time. He tried repeatedly to engage me in friendly conversation, but beyond official matters I would not go. He even showed me preferment in duty, but I was so thoroughly disgusted with him, so indignant at the way in which he had treated me, that I always avoided him. He often came into tents where I was, simply, as I believed, to make friends with me, and as often I made some excuse to go out. Through the captain and other officers he tried to win me over with compliments, but my wrongs had burned so into my heart that he made no headway.

On the evening of the battle of West Point, a lieutenant of the regiment was mortally wounded, and later the colonel and I met beside his cot in the hospital, while I was taking down the young fellow's last messages and requests. At such a time I could not but speak civilly to the man. He departed shortly, but I stayed with the dying lieutenant until the end. As I came out of the hospital tent I perceived the colonel standing under a tree. I touched my cap and would have hurried past, but he stopped me with: "Davis, I want to speak to you."

"What are your orders, colonel?" I said.

"No, no, I have no orders; I want to talk to you."

"I wish to hold nothing but official communication with you, sir," I replied, and started on.

"For God's sake, stop, Davis, and hear me," pleaded the colonel, this time with a plaintive earnestness that arrested me at once. So, turning and looking him full in the face, I said:

"Colonel Thomas, more than a month ago I received from you the most brutal, insulting, cowardly treatment it has ever been my misfortune to experience or even hear of. You have never been man enough to apologize for it, and until you do, I shall decline to have anything but official intercourse with you; and when I tell you that I loathe and despise you, you will probably wish, as I do, that we may have as little to do with each other as possible. So long as I am unfortunate enough to have you as commanding officer I shall obey your orders; nothing more. You have done your worst, and I defy you. Do we understand each other now, sir?"

"Davis," persisted the man, "I know I did you a great wrong. I wanted to apologize long ago, but you never give me a chance. I can't talk as some men can, but my heart is in the right place, and you haven't got a better friend in the army. I want your friendship; I want to apologize a hundred times over. Tell me what to say, and I'll say anything." And he held out his hands imploringly.

The pain depicted on the poor fellow's countenance touched me, and what he said carried with it the conviction of sincerity. He was a brave man, I knew, for I had seen him that day where cowards would not have ventured. Besides, we had met upon sacred ground at the deathbed of our friend. And had we not faced destruction together that very afternoon, and were we not likely to do so again on the morrow? All this came over me at once, and softened me completely.

"Colonel Thomas," I said, "my hand. You are a brave man, and as such you cannot intend to be unjust. I accept your apology, though I regret that it was not offered long ago. Say not another word."

We walked back to camp arm in arm, and great indeed was the astonishment of the regiment at sight of us.

From that day the colonel and I were fast friends. He recommended me to the vacant first lieutenancy, and offered to make me adjutant. His concern when I was wounded at Seven Pines was such that he went himself to General McClellan's headquarters to hurry my leave of absence. Afterward, upon my return to the regiment, I found that he had meanwhile recommended me to General Benton for staff duty, which I accepted and remained in until I left the army.

BENEDICT GORDON.

By REVERE RODGERS.

[Written for the SUNDAY GLOBE.]

CHAPTER VII.

On a narrow side street that extended from the canal to the river there stood for many years an old and dilapidated mansion that was built and occupied sometime in the middle part of the eighteenth century by one John Barton, an enormously wealthy and eccentric gentleman, although comparatively a young man when he first settled in Georgetown. Old residents of Georgetown well remember the tales handed down to them by their ancestors of the lavish hospitality that the proprietor of this fine old mansion was wont to bestow upon his friends.

The nobility and the gentry of the surrounding country were frequenters at this famous old house, and many were the merry gatherings assembled here on festal occasions. Those were the days of true chivalry. Ah! but sad to say, although the descendants of a number of the old families still remain, they are straightened as regards finances, and their old ancestral homes in many cases carry heavy mortgages upon them. A few years more perhaps will see the last of the scions of that noble old aristocracy that for years the quaint old town was famous for. But I fear I digress somewhat from my subject, but I was born and bred in the old place, and I love it and its people.

Among the many gallants that were constant visitors at the Barton house was the dashing young Lieutenant Washington, having but recently won his spurs in the campaigns with Braddock. Indeed, if rumor is to be believed, it was in this very house that Washington made a declaration of marriage to that gay young hoyden, "Dolly" Barber, who was for years a reigning belle in this vicinity.

But at the period of which I write this once famous house had fallen into a sad state of decay. The remaining window panes were shattered; the blinds were nearly all gone, and the massive oaken doors sagged frightfully upon their rusty hinges.

Indeed it was a matter of current report about the neighborhood that the old Barton Mansion was haunted, and if anyone scouted the idea of such being the case all that person had to do was to interview any of the numerous river men that were located about the numerous grogshops in that neighborhood, and he must needs be a most contrary person indeed to still continue his doubting theories after one of these nautical gentlemen finished with him about the curious happenings connected with the old Barton Mansion.

The queer stories connected with this silent and grim old house as narrated by the river men and the people in the neighborhood and needless to mention most devoutly believed by them were about as follows: On certain nights of the year, between the hour of midnight and two o'clock in the morning, the old Barton mansion would suddenly become all ablaze with lights and the sound of the harp and the fiddle could be distinctly heard out upon the Potomac. The figures of people attired in the costumes of long ago could be plainly seen as they passed and repassed the many windows in some sort of a stately dance. One figure that towered high above the others and seemed to be a center of attraction for them all is popularly supposed to be the spirit of George Washington, but whether there is any foundation for such extravagant fancies I know not, but I do know that persons having business in this locality at night make it a point to give the place a wide berth, while children who are sent out on errands after dusk make a detour of several blocks rather than pass by this old house.

In the year 1852 the people who then resided along the canal front were greatly surprised to awake one morning and find the old Barton house was tenanted. This fact was obvious from the appearance at times of a woman slightly past the middle age and of robust build.

Closer scrutiny upon the part of the neighbors developed the fact that the woman had a daughter, of perhaps eighteen or twenty years of age, and as neither of the two women made any attempt to become acquainted in the neighborhood, many conflicting rumors, both good and bad, were circulated about them, but as most of the people in that locality were themselves of a decidedly doubtful character, they had a fellow feeling for anyone that might be what is vulgarly termed "shady," so the strange woman and her daughter were not annoyed by impertinent questionings.

It soon began to be noised about the vicinity that the woman's name was Rider, and that she was called Mother Rider by the strange men that begin to visit her house.

To account for the large number of her male visitors, the woman told Miss Janie Bobbit, who kept the little one and two penny story at the corner, that she bought and sold seamen's outfits and when necessary furnished meals to seamen; when this news had been imparted to Miss Bobbit's customers, there were many mysterious noddings of heads and apologetic snorts and coughs, but no one gave vent to their feelings in any other manner, and in reply to Miss Bobbit's observation that she had always found Mrs. Rider a perfect lady, the other ladies who were present said they were also of Miss Bobbit's opinion, "although Mrs. Rider certainly did keep herself close."

It was three o'clock in the morning and Mother Rider and her daughter, a girl of a distinctly handsome, but defiant appearance, sat drinking hot gin before a smoldering fire, in a rear room of the dilapidated old mansion. The clock striking three at that moment seemed to arouse the elder woman from a reverie she had been plunged in for the past half hour.

"I wonder what keeps them," she mused, as she arose to throw another piece of wood on the fire, "they surely ought to be here now, hadn't they?" she inquired, turning to her daughter.

"I should think so," replied that young lady in a short, snappish manner, "and I wish they were too, for I'm blessed if I like this sitting up all night business; but whose the other fellow with Grimes?" she inquired, showing a little interest in her questions.

"Why, I expect, Alice dearie, that Joey didn't give me his right name," answered the older woman, "but he's a swell that's broke and has a fine proud spirit, so he has, for instead of borrowing from his friends, he—well he takes from them without shaming himself, by asking from them anything, which is a brave way of doing business, I think, and which shows him to be a clever lad, don't you think so?" asked Mother Rider, with a curious smile upon her thin lips.

"You mean that he visits at the houses of the people, whom he afterwards robs?" inquired the girl, who already had an inkling of the true state of affairs.

"That's it, dearie," cried Mother Rider, fully enjoying the novelty of the situation, "he goes to balls and parties at their houses, and he keeps his eyes about him, and then when they are all abed, him and Joey goes back and makes their lucky."

At this moment there came a stealthy knock at the back door, and Mother Rider, hastily grabbing up the lighted candle from the table, quickly left the room.

"What luck, Buddy," she hurriedly asked as she ushered in Ross and Saunders.

"The hell's own luck," retorted Ross with a furious oath, as he strode by into the other room.

"You don't mean to say," began Mother Rider, her face flushing angrily.

"I mean to say," broke in Ross as he cooly helped himself to the gin, "that things couldn't be any worse for me and him than they is now." As he said this he jerked his finger in Saunders direction and immediately afterwards gulped down a large glass of gin.

After Saunders had been introduced to the women, under the name of Vernon, the evening adventures of the men were related to them as they had occurred. Ross, after a few words, asked for something to eat, and when this had been set before him he fell to at the victuals with the appetite of a hungry man, while Saunders glibly recited the evening adventures to Mother Rider and her daughter, fully explaining the cause of the failure of his and his companion's plan. During the recital the older woman never ceased to regard the man searchingly; her daughter seemingly fascinated with the fellow hung upon his every word, and Saunders, man of the world that he was, easily perceived how interesting he was becoming to the girl and exerted his agreeable powers to their utmost.

"What we want's to do now, mother, is to lay here close for a few days until this here thing blows over," said Ross, as he arose from the table and began brushing the bread crumbs from his clothes.

"Of course, Buddy, that's the only thing you can do now," said Mother Rider, slowly, "but I do hope that things ain't as bad as what you say they are, because these people, being rich, will be apt to offer a big reward for the capture of you and your friend."

"Pshaw," said Ross, impatiently, "ain't I done the same trick afore, and did I ever get 'pinched?'"

"I know that, too, Buddy," said the woman, "but these people is altogether different, and there is a deal more danger than there was in the others."

"Danger or no danger," answered Ross, "I'm going to bed, so show the way, mother, without any more of your d——d croaking," and together the two men ascended the stairs.

[To be continued.]